

Student Field Preparation Guide

MEXICO

THE SCHOOL FOR FIELD STUDIES STUDENT FIELD PREPARATION
GUIDE 2010-2011 MEXICO

INTRODUCTION

This Student Field Preparation Guide is an important tool which includes everything you need to know to prepare for your international education experience! Use it from the time you are accepted to the program, when you are getting ready to leave, while you are in the field and even after you return home.

We begin with a reminder list of the vital tasks you need to accomplish, including what you need to send to SFS and when. There is information about plane tickets, travel documents and insurance, and some helpful safety tips. Next, you will find information about the particular country and Center where you will be spending a semester or summer. Along with some background on these places, we have included a packing list and some suggestions concerning finances to help guide you in planning what to bring with you. There is also information about what life is like at your Center on a day-to-day basis and what to expect as far as living conditions. Finally, we have included some resources on safety and traveling abroad, and details on our school-wide policies. **Please be sure to read through the entire Guide** and don't hesitate to contact your Admissions Counselor with any questions.

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PREPARING FOR DEPARTURE

PREPARATION CHECKLIST

Paperwork and Fees to Send to SFS

All required forms should be sent to SFS:

**The School for Field Studies
10 Federal Street, Suite 24
Salem, MA 01970**

- Nonrefundable deposit of \$650(semester) or \$450 (summer). Due 10 business days after acceptance.
- SFS Financial Aid Application (if applicable). Due 10 business days after acceptance.
- SFS Online Medical Review Form. Due 10 business days after acceptance.
- SFS Physical Examination & Authorization Form. Due 10 business days after acceptance.

No student may enter the field until a current SFS Medical Review Form and Physical Examination & Authorization Form have been reviewed and approved by SFS personnel. Inaccurate, incomplete or fraudulent information on your SFS Medical Review Form could jeopardize your safety and the safety of other students and staff during the program. This may be grounds for not admitting you, recalling you from the program, or restricting your participation in certain activities which may affect the quality of your experience and/or your academic credit.

- SFS Terms and Regulations Contract due 10 business days after acceptance.
- Acknowledgement and Assumption of Risks Form due 10 business days after acceptance
- Credit Registration Form (semester students only). These can be submitted electronically through your online checklist at www.fieldstudies.org.
- Final tuition payment. Due 60 days prior to start of program.
- Updated SFS Medical Review Form and Physical Examination & Authorization Form if there are *any* changes to the information before you depart.

Other Preparation To Do's

- Contact SFS alumni on campus or as provided by SFS to learn more about what to expect.
- Obtain passport/Check to make sure your passport is valid.
- Obtain visa for entry into country if necessary. See Passport and Visa section of this Field Guide for more information.

- If you are a permanent resident of the U.S. or an international student returning to school in the U.S after the program, please be sure to have the necessary documentation for re-entry into the United States.
- Obtain required clothing and equipment (see packing list later in this document).
- Make travel arrangements that meet the schedule outlined by the group flight departure and arrival times. (If traveling independently, have itinerary approved by, and submitted to, SFS).
- Prepare with your doctor and a Travel Specialist to cover all your travel plans in the countries where you plan to go. Be sure to review:
 - Your immunization history and requirements for every region in which you plan to travel (some information in the Safety section of this Guide)
 - Your fitness level
 - Medications and prescriptions in sufficient quantities and in their original containers. Check with your insurance company on how to fill prescriptions for several months in advance as you may not be able to find the medicine you need in-country.
 - Any changes in treatment programs
 - Understand what the risks are for each place where you'll be going.
- Make sure you have health insurance (required). You will have to fill this in on your SFS Medical Review Form. Check with your provider to make certain that your policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the places where you're going. The evacuation and repatriation insurance that you receive from SFS is **not** medical or dental insurance.
- Make arrangements to have student housing/registration/summer employment taken care of before departure.
- Leave Center Address (can be found later in this document) for friends and family to contact you.
- Make two clear copies of your plane ticket and your passport. Take one copy of each with you and leave one copy with a friend or family member.
- Read this Guide carefully in its entirety, including the sections later in this document on life at your particular Center, traveling and living abroad, safety in the country where you'll be going, and SFS policies.**

Optional

- Obtain personal property insurance (e.g. for your laptop computer) if you so desire; SFS does not provide this.
- Purchase travel /course cancellation insurance if you wish. You may want to check with your home university if you are unable to locate a provider on your own. This is different from evacuation and repatriation insurance, which is provided by SFS.

INSURANCE

HEALTH INSURANCE

Students are required to carry health insurance valid in the country or countries of program operation, while enrolled in SFS programs. You will not be allowed to join an SFS program without identifying such coverage. Some insurance carriers do not cover out-of-country medical expenses. Therefore, you should ensure that your medical insurance policy offers coverage outside of the United States and specifically in the country where the program is being held. Those insurance companies that do provide international coverage often do so on a reimbursable basis. Mexican public or private hospitals and clinics will not accept insurance for payment. In most cases, you will need to secure a payment with a credit card deposit. This means that you will need to have a valid credit card to pay for your medical expenses up front and then request reimbursement when you return home. If your current policy does not provide coverage outside the U.S., the SFS Admissions staff can provide information on affordable short-term insurance options.

In the event that you require medical attention during a program, a staff member will accompany you on the visit(s) to a medical facility. You will be liable for all these incidental expenses, including travel, meals, etc, incurred by all parties involved during these visits. You must pay in full for these expenses prior to your departure from the program.

PERSONAL PROPERTY INSURANCE

SFS insurance does not cover the personal property of students, staff and visitors. You may wish to check on your current policies or purchase some.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

SFS insurance does not cover travel or course cancellation. You may wish to purchase some, so check with Advantage Travel or your travel agent for more information on your options.

EVACUATION AND REPATRIATION INSURANCE

Most insurance companies do not cover medical evacuation costs. SFS provides students with emergency medical evacuation and repatriation insurance through Seabury & Smith. This insurance is effective for the duration of the program and for seven days immediately following the program. You will receive an insurance card during the orientation at the Center. Note: this is **not** the same as health/medical or dental insurance!

Benefits include:

- Unlimited coverage for emergency evacuation.
- \$20,000 for repatriation of mortal remains.
- Assistance services (see below for details)

The travel assistance benefits are provided by American International Assistance Services, Inc., (AIAS), with assistance centers located throughout the world and staffed 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. Some of the services which can be accessed through AIAS include:

- Worldwide, 24-hour medical care location services
- Medical transportation arrangements
- Medical case monitoring, arranging of communications between patient, family, physicians, consulate, etc.
- Arranging medical transportation home after treatment

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

You are responsible for making your own travel arrangements and for paying your travel to and from the program. You have many choices: you may wish to book your ticket over the Internet, through your local travel agent or by working with Advantage Travel Agency to book a seat on the group flight arranged by SFS for most semester and summer programs.

ADVANTAGE TRAVEL AND GROUP FLIGHTS

You are not required to travel on the group flight, nor is it guaranteed to be the cheapest flight available. However, there are a number of benefits to joining the SFS group flight, including:

- You can take advantage of group ticket rates.
- Your itinerary is guaranteed to meet the group pickup/drop off program schedule.
- Advantage Travel has some influence with airlines to make ticket adjustments in the event of last-minute program date changes or cancellation, lost tickets, or other unforeseen circumstances.
- This travel agent is familiar with SFS programs.
- This will be one-stop shopping for your travel plans, both to and from the program and for other trips if you plan to travel during a break or pre/post-program.
- It will be fun to begin your travels with your fellow SFS students!

MAKING YOUR TRAVEL PLANS ON THE INTERNET OR THROUGH A LOCAL TRAVEL AGENT

Be sure to arrive at the pickup location on time! All travel plans must be reviewed and approved by your SFS Admissions Counselor prior to purchase. The Advantage Travel Agency group flight schedule determines the program meeting time at the destination airport, as well as the program departure time and place. We'll meet the group at the airport at the time of the group

flight and coordinate transportation to the Center. If you miss the group pickup time, you are responsible for getting to the Center on your own.

Regardless of whether the ticket is purchased through Advantage Travel or another agent, SFS is not responsible for reimbursing travel expenses for programs cancelled or rescheduled due to acts of war or civil unrest, acts of God, strikes, weather, quarantine/epidemics/sickness, government regulations, or failure of equipment, power or communications. Therefore, The School routinely does not authorize its designated agent to issue tickets until 30 days prior to the start of a program.

If you opt to travel before or after your program, be sure to check with immigration officials regarding your visa status. It's a great idea to arrange all your travel before you leave because the only chance you'll have to exchange tickets is during mid-term break of the semester program (if applicable) or at the end of the summer program.

Be sure to join a frequent flyer program! Also, check with your agent about multiple stops or stopovers; long trips are an excellent opportunity to see other countries or regions for a small fee or at no extra cost, but this usually needs to be arranged at the time of ticket purchase.

PASSPORT AND VISA

You must have a passport to enter all of the countries where our programs take place. Make certain that your passport is valid until six months after the program ends.

Mexico semester students need to request a 90-day tourist card when they arrive in Mexico and then will obtain a student visa upon arrival at the Center. Do not apply for a visa in advance of the program! The cost of a student visa (for semester students who are U.S. Citizens) is \$USD 100 and is covered by the fees that you have paid along with your tuition. Summer students do not need a student visa. Non-U.S. citizens are also required to have a passport and may have special visa requirements.

Students under the age of 18 are required by Mexican law to carry notarized written permission from their parents authorizing their unaccompanied travel. This permission must include the name(s) of the parent(s), the name of the student, the name of anyone traveling with the student, and the notarized signature(s) of the absent parent(s). The State Department recommends that the permission should include travel dates, destinations, airlines and a brief summary of the circumstances surrounding the travel. The student must be carrying the original letter – not a facsimile or scanned copy – as well as proof of the parent/student relationship (usually a birth certificate or court document). Travelers should contact the Mexican Embassy or closest Mexican Consulate for current information.

ABOUT BAHÍA MAGDALENA, BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR

Baja California is an 800-mile-long peninsula extending south from California. Baja California Sur lies on the west side of the famous San Andreas Fault; the mainland is east. The deep rift caused by shifting land masses now forms the deep Sea of Cortez, also known as the Gulf of California. Baja California Sur averages less than 70 miles wide. At its narrowest, near La Paz, it is just 26 miles to the Pacific coast.

The California current carries cool water from the north along the Pacific side of the peninsula. These nutrient-rich waters and the calm, protected bays along the Pacific coast attract a large variety of marine birds and mammals. There have been more than 20 species of whales and dolphins recorded in the waters surrounding the peninsula. The most famous of these are the migrating gray whales, which travel from Alaska to Baja California Sur every winter and spring to mate and give birth to their young in the bays along the Pacific coast of the peninsula. The Sea of Cortez abounds with other sea life as well.



HISTORY OF BAJA CALIFORNIA SUR

Baja California Sur has been inhabited since pre-Columbian times. Because of its deserts and the surrounding sea, however, human populations there have never been dense. The first Spanish explorers arrived on the peninsula in 1533, but were defeated by the Cochimi Indians. Spanish explorer Hernan Cortez arrived in 1535, but again, his party was no match for the local inhabitants. English pirates visited the area and Jesuit priests came to establish their missions in 1697. It was not until 1811, however, that the peninsula's first large European settlement was established at La Paz. In the late 20th century, the communities surrounding Bahía Magdalena have grown and developed into permanent fishing

towns.

GEOGRAPHY AND ECOLOGY

Bahía Magdalena (Magdalena Bay) is considered to be the "Chesapeake Bay of the Pacific coast of North America." Encompassing more than 500,000 acres, it is perhaps the largest remaining intact coastal wetland along the Pacific coast of both North and South America. The bay is 200 miles long, ten miles wide, and protected from the open ocean by five barrier islands.

Biogeographically, Bahía Magdalena is unique among coastal wetlands in the Americas; it is the transition zone between the warm equatorial waters of the tropics and the cool waters of the temperate latitudes. As a result, it is home to an amazing diversity of migratory birds, fish,



plants, and animals including black sea turtles, bald eagles, white ibis, bobcats, gray whales, and black, white and red mangroves.

The Bahía Magdalena landscape is amazing, with many diverse and unique habitats. Mangrove forest, the predominant wetland habitat type in the tropics, covers vast areas, but there are a myriad of other habitats for students to explore and research. Starting at the eastern shore of the bay and moving east to west, one first finds desert upland areas with unique plants and animals, many endemic to the Santo Domingo Valley. Next are the mangrove forests and salt flats that are each, in their respective ways, the engines that drive the incredible productivity of the bay. At the edge of the bay are the mud flats that are home to extraordinary quantities of shellfish and intertidal invertebrates, which are critical to the immense numbers of migratory waterfowl and shorebirds that rely on the bay during the northern and southern migrations, as well as to the local fishermen and their families. The bay itself is fairly shallow and its planktonic productivity is a direct result of the food provided to these organisms by the decaying leaves of the mangroves and the minerals provided by the salt flats. Moving still further west, we find the spectacular dune and mountain landscapes of the bay's barrier islands. On the inside of the islands are soft dunes and tranquil coves. On the outside, the Pacific constantly pounds surf on brilliant white beaches.

PEOPLE OF THE REGION

The area's human landscape is equally varied and interesting. Bahía Magdalena is situated on the edge of the Santo Domingo Valley, the richest agricultural region of Baja California Sur. The Valley is also home to Ciudad Constitución, the largest city of the region, with a population of 35,000. Although it is blessed with fertile soil, the agricultural production of the Santo Domingo Valley is irrigated by pumping water from deep aquifers at a rate much faster than the natural recharge rate. Consequently, the long-term production of the area is in serious jeopardy.

Bahía Magdalena and the marine zones to its north constitute some of the most productive and lucrative fisheries of the entire Baja California Sur peninsula. The majority of the people living here reside in Puerto Adolfo Lopez Mateos (pop. 1,500) at the northern end of the bay, and Puerto San Carlos (pop. 4,500) at the center of the bay (home to the SFS Center for Coastal Studies). These towns are what social scientists refer to as natural resource communities (NRCs). That is, the majority of people living in these towns are dependent on the natural resources available in the ecosystems surrounding the community. In the case of the towns of Bahía Magdalena, the predominant natural resources are fish, shrimp, lobster, abalone, oysters, scallops, and blue crab. The long-term viability of these marine and coastal resources depends on sustainable harvesting by the residents.

PUERTO SAN CARLOS

Puerto San Carlos is situated on a small mangrove and cactus-fringed peninsula. This relatively new community was established when the commercial fishing pier and the fish (tuna and sardine) cannery were built during the late Fifties and early Sixties, making San Carlos the only other

ARRIVAL AT THE AIRPORT IN MEXICO

Upon arrival in Mexico, you will go through immigration. You will be required to complete a Mexican Tourist Card, which is distributed either during airline check-in or on board the aircraft. You should present your passport and completed Tourist Card to the immigration official. Immigration automatically administers a 30-day stamp so semester students must ask the Immigration Officer for 90 days before handing over their passport and Tourist Card ("QUISIERA NOVENTA DIAS POR FAVOR"). Summer students do not need to ask for additional days. Be sure to keep your Tourist Card with your passport in a safe place, as you will be required to surrender it when you get your student visa after arriving at the Center. After picking up your luggage, you will go through Customs and present your completed Customs Declaration Form. Once you have cleared your luggage through customs, an SFS representative will meet you. If your bags did not arrive, you will need to complete a lost baggage form at the airline desk after clearing customs. An SFS staff member will help you make arrangements to get your baggage to the Center. Taking care to put your name and the Center address on and in all of your bags will help you reclaim lost luggage more easily.

The Center's address is:

Center for Coastal Studies/AP 15
Puerto San Carlos, BCS
CP 23740
MEXICO

WEATHER AND CLIMATE

Weather in Baja California Sur is often unpredictable. Please pay close attention to the clothing list and come prepared. In the Bahía Magdalena region, temperatures are quite a bit cooler than in the Gulf of California region. Although the sun is almost always shining, the weather can be cold, particularly at night. This is especially true in the months of November through June, when there is an up welling of cold water in the Pacific. During this period, daily temperatures range between 60°F and 75°F. The night temperatures will range between 30°F and 60°F. There are also several periods during the year that are windy and you will be very glad to have brought warm gear! The coldest winds occur between November and February and again from April to June. The summers, beginning in July and running through October can be hot and humid with daytime temperatures ranging between 80°F and 95°F with nighttime temperatures cooling down to from 65°F to 85°F.

WHAT TO BRING

LARGE BACKPACK with enough room to bring all you need for camping. Your sleeping bag and pad do not need to fit inside, but if they do- even better. You will use this pack when going

on the spring or fall break. You can also try to use it as one of your two pieces of checked luggage when coming to the program.

ELECTRICAL APPLIANCES

The voltage (110) and outlets are the same at the Center as in the United States; there is no need for an adapter or converter. There are electrical outlets in the student cabins.

REQUIRED CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS

Items	Semester Programs	Summer Programs
Shorts - Shorts are fine to wear at the Center; they should reach mid-thigh.	3-4	3-4
Long pants - One pair for rough use and one nicer but casual pair for visits to town or everyday wear in the evenings. Jeans or khakis are good and multipurpose. Pants can also provide protection from the sun and insects.	2-3	2-3
T-shirts and tank tops (past students recommend bringing some made of quick dry or wicking fabrics)	7	7
Long-sleeved, lightweight cotton shirts	2-3	1
Sweaters or heavy sweatshirts (past students have recommended bringing one zip up that is nicer than a sweatshirt for wearing into town in the evening)	2	2
Fleece jacket	1	1
Fleece pants or sweatpants	1-2	1-2
Waterproof rain jacket and pants/bibs. We use these on turtle monitoring trips. You might consider rubberized foul weather gear, which is what the local fishermen wear. If not, you should bring waterproofed nylon or Goretex, not light vinyl as it tears too easily. Keep in mind that salt is rough on gear. A poncho will not be adequate!	1 set	1 set
Rubber Boots (essential for getting in and out of boats)	1	1
Bathing suits	2	2
Pajamas	1-2	1-2
Casual but dressy outfits - shirts and slacks/skirts/dresses for eveningwear, trips to town, community meetings and special occasions.	1-2	1

Underwear	2 weeks' worth	2 weeks' worth
Socks	7-14 days' worth	7-14 days' worth
Lightweight hiking shoes or sturdy running shoes - for light hiking during the program	1	1
Running shoes (only needed if pair above won't work for everyday use)	0-1	0-1
Flip-flops (thongs or sandals, one pair for shower)	2	2
Tevas/Chacos/athletic sandals - a MUST. These MAY be the most important part of your wardrobe. Please choose a pair that can get wet and that preferably has a heel strap so they'll stay on in the mud.	1	1
Lightweight casual or semi-dressy shoes (nicer sandals/shoes for going out in town but no heels)	0-1	0-1
Sunglasses: UV blocking, polarized type recommended. It's worth spending a little extra for good quality. Bringing a cheap extra pair is also a good idea in case you lose or break the first pair.	2	1-2
Baseball cap or other sun hat. Ideally, look for something that will cover your ears from the sun and with a strap as it can be very windy on the boats.	1	1
Wool/fleece hat. Even if it isn't very cold, you will want something to keep your ears warm while out on the water at length, especially when it's windy.	1	1
Bandanas	0-1	0-1

Loose, cool, cotton clothes are most comfortable but polypro or capilene is also nice for the colder months and evenings on the water. Any clothing that dries quickly is also a big plus. As mentioned in the "Weather and Climate" section, the temperatures can be very cool in the evenings and colder than most people expect during the spring semester. The clothing you bring will be intensely used. In general, dress will be functional, but you will want to bring something nicer (but still casual) for excursions into town and for final community presentations. Puerto San Carlos is a small, conservative town and people dress up when in public. To avoid unwanted attention, we ask you to avoid wearing tank tops, halter tops, short shorts or SHORT skirts away from the CCS site. Having said this, young people in San Carlos may wear the above attire at times.

CCS has laundry facilities. You will be able to wash your clothes once a week. The Center does not have dryers; clothes are hung on the line. Laundry soap is easy to find in San Carlos and is inexpensive and biodegradable. Unless you have special soap needs due to skin allergies, you should buy it once you arrive.

Personal Items and Items for the Cabana

- Twin sheets – 1 flat, 1 fitted. Mosquito nets are provided at the Center.
- Pillow and pillowcase
- Medium-weight sleeping bag (rated to 35° F). Most students use their sleeping bag as a blanket.
- Closed-cell foam pad: Thermarest-type air mattresses are the most comfortable. You should consider lightweight backpacker models. When the program goes camping in the field, you must have some insulation between you and the ground.
- Towels (2 – for boat, beach and bathing)
- Toiletries: For most products, a one month's supply will suffice as many brands can be purchased locally. However, if you use a specialty product or strongly prefer a particular brand, you may want to bring enough for the full session. For females, tampons are available in limited quantities in Puerto San Carlos and Cd. Constitucion, the other items are readily available. We request that you bring biodegradable soap, shampoo and conditioner which are not available in town.
- Personal kit with first aid and sanitary supplies: SFS will have several large first aid kits at the Center, but all students should have a small kit for field accidents which should include a bee sting kit (if necessary), cold medicine, Band-Aids, antiseptic cream, little scissors, aspirin, lip balm, sunscreen, Pepto Bismol, topical anti-itch spray/cream, any personal needs, etc. A bottle of hand sanitizer would be very handy!
- 2 Plastic or stainless steel 1-quart water bottles. The “wide-mouth” Nalgene type are the best. Remember that you will be living in the desert, so drinking lots of water is one of the most important things you can do to ensure your health and safety.
- Travel Mug
- Tupperware: sandwich container (will be used frequently for field exercises), for camping trips bring a spoon, fork and knife and maybe an extra sandwich container or bowl.
- Extra prescription glasses or contacts
- A copy of your prescription for eyeglasses or contact lenses in case you need to replace these items while in Mexico
- Headlamp
- Water-resistant wristwatch
- Travel alarm clock or alarm on watch
- ATM card

Items for the Field and Classroom

- USB flash drive (also known as a USB keychain drive, USB micro drive, or USB thumb drive), with a capacity of at least 64MB (megabytes)
- CD-Rs (writable CDs). You can use these to take your work and photos home with you at the end of the program if they might not fit on your USB stick.
- Large daypack or small backpack: Must be big enough to carry a field book, journal, 2 water bottles, camera, scientific equipment, extra clothes, sunscreen, etc. into the field.
- Notebooks (1 large for fall and spring programs, 1 small for summer programs, as well as one field notebook for all programs). These can be purchased in Puerto San Carlos.
- Record of International Travel Immunizations.

- Folding Camp Chair: Crazy Creek, Thermarest, and several other companies make good ones. This is needed for outdoor lectures.
- Zip-lock bags or dry bag for notebooks, cameras, binoculars. You will be on a boat much of the time and these will be invaluable for keeping important gear dry and protected.
- Pocketknife (Swiss Army or similar) - optional
- Insect repellent (An effective repellent is vital. May not be needed for spring semester)
- Waterproof sunscreen (1 bottle per month of program with 15 or higher sun protection factor. Make sure you bring enough, it's VERY expensive here!)
- Chapstick with sunscreen
- Snorkeling gear: Some of the field exercises involve snorkeling. Gear should include:
 - Mask (Check for good fit and seal around the face.)
 - Fins (shoe-style or strap-backs with booties)
 - Snorkel
 - 2-3 mm, full length wetsuit (SPRING semester only)

OPTIONAL CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

The following is a list of optional items that have been mentioned by former students as things they wished they had brought or were glad they had with them. Disclaimer: use your own discretion. Bring it only if you have space in your luggage and you've packed the necessities.

- Laptop computer. Students are encouraged to bring their own personal laptops for the added convenience and freedom that they provide. There are a limited number of computers at the site, so you will appreciate having an alternative when the Center computers are in high demand. As a general recommendation, this should be a PC or Mac compatible laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2000 or later software, or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents. A portable drive might also be a good idea to bring even if you don't plan on bringing your own laptop as they come in handy quite often. You should also bring a portable surge suppressor, wireless internet card, a laptop carrying case, and a security cable or lock to protect your laptop.

Note: SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance.

- Laundry bag/ collapsible basket – can also be purchased locally
- Laundry stain stick
- Gloves (great for community cleanups – leather or gardening type); also, warm gloves for cold evenings on the boat- can we move this to required?
- Camera and lots of film or extra memory sticks: Small, automatic cameras are great for camp, people, and scenery pictures. If you want to take pictures of whales, dolphins, or birds, however, you will need a 100 or 200 mm telephoto lens (or equivalent zoom

- lens). Film in Mexico is expensive and you should bring what you plan to use with you from the U.S.
- Binoculars (these are recommended): They should be good quality and 7 x 35 or better. A strong zip-lock bag will help protect them. You may consider borrowing them if you don't already own them, but you must make certain they are in good condition and can be focused. The better the binoculars, the more you will be able to learn and enjoy your work.
 - Video camera (discuss this with your SFS Admissions Counselor first)
 - Simple sewing and repair kit (needle and thread, safety pins, and cord)
 - Nylon stuff sacks or dry bags (to keep gear separate and dry)
 - Shower caddy
 - Mini mirror for cabin
 - A Spanish-English dictionary
 - Personal music player (and portable speakers if you want)
 - Musical instruments, art supplies, small games (beach or table), readings, inspirational materials to share with the group, sudoku, crossword puzzles, hemp, and craft supplies are great for long van rides and camping trips.
 - DVD's - we have a lounge with a DVD/VCR – Mexican Customs technically allows you to bring in only 5 DVD's
 - Decorations and sticky tack to hang pictures
 - Rechargeable batteries with recharger
 - Paperback book(s) to read and exchange, journal to write in
 - Favorite recipes for Sunday dinners
 - Earplugs to minimize noise if you are a light sleeper
 - Cloth napkin to save on paper
 - A calling card (make sure it will work from Mexico - the best deals are at Sam's Club/Costco and you can use them on the student phone in the lounge) or sign up for Skype, an internet calling service, if you'll be bringing your laptop.

FINANCES

Listed below is a partial cost estimate for the SFS program in Baja California Sur. However, the total amount will vary significantly with an individual's pre- and post-course travel plans and souvenir and equipment purchases. This list does not include an estimate of expenses before and after the program, or during days off. Please realize that costs are higher than in mainland Mexico in Baja California Sur and are comparable with the U.S. in tourist cities like Cabo San Lucas.

Puerto San Carlos does NOT have an ATM machine. You should bring about \$100 dollars worth of pesos with you to Mexico since it may take a few days to be able to access the ATM. There is an ATM machine in Ciudad Constitucion, about 45 minutes away. Staff members will be able to take money out for you when they are passing through, or on camping trips you will usually have a chance to use the ATM.

You may choose to bring traveler's checks as a backup; although they are not readily exchangeable in San Carlos, they may be useful during the mid-semester break (semester students only). Using these during the program will require a staff member's taking your

passport and the signed checks to a bank; in order for them to be successfully cashed, the signature on your passport **MUST** exactly match the signature on the checks. You should not carry large amounts of cash, but having some cash is advisable. Although credit cards are not generally accepted in Puerto San Carlos, you may find having one convenient during the mid-semester break (semester students only). In addition, most banks in the state have electronic teller windows for Cirrus and Plus-equipped bankcards. All major credit cards are accepted (e.g., Visa, Mastercard, Amex) in the major tourist areas but will be harder to use in more remote areas such as San Carlos. U.S. personal checks are not accepted anywhere, including at the Center.

Please think ahead, work up a personal budget, and plan for this program. It is very difficult to wire money to Mexico and financial troubles half way through the program will disrupt the quality of your experience.

The Center has a safe where you can store your cash, passport, and other small valuables.

ESTIMATED COSTS

Expenditure	Semester	Summer
PFD security deposit	\$5	\$5
Spending money	\$200-\$500	\$100-\$300
Break travel	\$300-\$800	N/A
Total	\$505-\$1,305	\$105-\$305

FACILITIES

As you walk from the center of town toward the tip of the peninsula, you will see a cluster of palm-roofed buildings edged by a sandy shore on one side and mangroves on the other. This is the Center for Coastal Studies. Keeping the environmental mission of the School in mind, the Center was constructed to minimize our consumption of the area's natural resources. The wastewater treatment system unique, filtering water through a created wetlands system and eventually to the various palm trees and plantings around the Center.

Student cabins are all situated around an open common area facing the bathhouse, which has separate facilities for men and women. The cabins each sleep four people and are divided into four small work areas with a desk and set of shelves for each person. Above each of these areas is a semi-private sleeping loft, which is accessible by a ladder. A ceiling fan provides air circulation in the summer. Individual lights illuminate each student's section. The kitchen/dining hall, faculty and staff offices, laundry room and classroom surround a raised, tiled courtyard. Staff houses are a few meters away. A separate building houses the lab and storage facility. A circular palapa shade structure is in the center of the site and serves as a common area for students and staff to hold meetings and socialize. A public telephone is located just outside the entrance to the Center.

Note that the water at the beach next to the Center is unfortunately too polluted for safe swimming. You may have the opportunity to swim at other beaches throughout the program (there are two beaches within five miles that are swimmable). Part of the Center's research

involves studying ways to clean up the bay and working with local stakeholders to make this happen.

RESEARCH EQUIPMENT

The Center owns or has access to the sampling, measuring, and recording equipment needed for use in the field or classroom. This includes geographic positioning system (GPS) gear, scales, tape recording gear, pH meters, water quality measuring equipment, etc. It should be noted that the Center is committed to nondestructive field research, which does not always require sophisticated laboratory equipment. Our field sites are the real laboratories.

LIBRARY AND COMPUTERS

The Center maintains a modest collection of classic and contemporary texts and journals focused on ecology, natural resource management, environmental economics, geography, anthropology, statistics, fisheries ecology and management, wetlands ecology and management, marine biology, coastal zone management, international development, sustainable development, conservation biology, environmental policy, and environmental ethics. The CCS library has a variety of papers from academic journals focused on the marine and coastal resources of Mexico, the U.S., and the world. This collection is NOT an exhaustive library of all resources necessary for your assignments and research, but a collection appropriate for a field station. Though SFS does its best to update books accordingly, you should plan to rely also on the databases and online library available to you through your home institution.

At a minimum, there will be five networked student computers available, running Microsoft Windows XP and Microsoft Office software. Access controls on all student computers will prevent additional software installations and settings changes.

If you have your own laptop, you are highly encouraged to bring it to the Center. This can help alleviate some of the stress involved during critical assignment periods, when computer access is in high demand. As a general recommendation, this should be an IBM or Mac compatible laptop less than 6 years old, containing Microsoft Office 2000 or later software, or office software that can export Microsoft Office compatible documents. Files can be transferred between your personal laptop and the Center's laptops for printing or other purposes, using your own USB flash drive or CDRs. Floppy disks and zip disks are not reliable in this environment and are therefore not recommended. You should also bring a portable surge suppressor, a laptop carrying case, and a security cable or lock to protect your laptop.

SFS cannot accept responsibility for ensuring the safety of students' personal computers, either onsite or in the field. Personal laptop insurance coverage can often be obtained through the credit card used to buy the equipment (check with your credit card company), or through homeowners' insurance.

All assignments can be saved to your network storage folder, which will be backed up by the network at the end of each day. This folder can be burned onto a CDR prior to departure from the program. You will be responsible for backing up and managing files saved on your personal

laptop or in any other location outside of your network storage folder. Be sure to take your project data with you upon completion of the program, as it will not be available from SFS later.

FOOD AND CLEANING

Meals and beverages are mainly prepared by two CCS cooks, although rotating teams of students will be responsible for cleaning up after meals, as well as some meal preparation. Be aware that Mexican fare often includes meat, chicken, or fish with almost every meal. Although SFS makes a great effort to accommodate the requirements of vegetarians, this is sometimes difficult. If you are vegan, you will need to be flexible and prepared to bear the burden of costs associated with any special dietary requirements. It may be difficult to accommodate exclusive dietary requirements. If such requirements are extreme, please contact an SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss your needs.

SFS asks only that you be flexible and realize that living in another country means experimenting with and enjoying the tastes of another culture. That said, the food in Mexico is wholesome and delicious. Virtually every meal will be served with rice, beans, and tortillas, as well as fresh vegetables and salad. Because Bahía Magdalena is home to many fishermen, there will be lots of fish and shellfish as well. While the water in Puerto San Carlos is potable, bottled water will always be available.

SPECIAL DIETARY/RELIGIOUS REQUIREMENTS:

Although past vegan students have found our meals to be both delicious and sufficient, please be prepared to bear any additional costs associated with veganism or any special dietary requirements. It may be difficult to accommodate exclusive dietary requirements; please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor to discuss any of your questions regarding your diet.

Also, if you have questions regarding a religious holiday which falls during program time, PLEASE contact your Admissions Counselor immediately upon acceptance. We will try to accommodate students' religious observances. However, schedules often involve complex coordination with many parties and reservations are often made months in advance. Any missed program time will necessarily need to be made up.

A TYPICAL DAY AT THE CENTER

Breakfast

0830 Morning meeting

0900 Lecture

1030 Lecture

1230 Lunch

1330 Work on assignments, research, local field work or community service

1800 Dinner

I900 Directed Research or guest lecture/presentation/workshop

Note that some days, field exercises can start as early as 5am.

Each student serves on a kitchen crew that has clean-up responsibilities about once a week. Each person also serves on some type of committee concerned with Center matters such as greening the campus, or helping to organize group activities. Finally, you will participate in a weekly "Center cleanup" session, during which students and staff clean house, vehicles, boats, equipment, and perform other Center maintenance and cleaning tasks.

A TYPICAL WEEK

After the first few days of orientation and organization, the program will include about 15 lectures a week, plus three to five other meetings (organizational, research/paper presentations, guest lectures). Academic scheduling is maintained on a six-day-per-week schedule. Twice a week, the program will be in the field for the whole morning and some of the afternoon. We usually have 2 Directed Research days per week all semester, and then the last week there are some extra ones

During field trips, intense data collection takes place, with groups of students cooperating to help each other collect data. While at the Center, writing, library research, and data reduction and interpretation take place. Additional meetings are scheduled to offer training sessions in the skills needed to complete the research. These include sessions on statistics, paper-writing formats, computer spreadsheets, word processing, and laboratory analysis.

Throughout the programs, one day each week is almost always reserved for studying and relaxing. While staff are provided with periodic days off throughout the program period, at least one staff member is always on duty at the Center.

STUDENTS AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Puerto San Carlos is small and you and your fellow students will be a highly visible group. Because the Center for Coastal Studies is strongly oriented towards community development and increasing the capacity of locals to sustainably manage their marine and coastal resources, it is critical that students work well with the residents of our town. The reward will be the relationships that you will build with local families, children, and fishermen. There will be opportunities to do community service volunteer work such as teaching English classes and environmental education during semester (and sometimes summer) programs.

Please remember that what is considered acceptable or appropriate varies from culture to culture and be sensitive to this when you are away from the Center or interacting with community members. The staff will brief you on this in more detail during Orientation.

LANGUAGE

Speaking at least some Spanish will greatly facilitate both your effectiveness in conducting research, and also your enjoyment of the program. Just a single semester of the language will make all the difference in the world to your experience. Language tapes or books can also be great tools for brushing up on your skills prior to the program.

MID-SEMESTER BREAK (Semester students only)

Semester programs in Mexico include a five-day break, during which time you are free to leave the program and travel on your own or in a group. The Center is closed during this break and you are responsible for yourself during this time. Some students meet up with friends or family, while others choose to travel with their classmates or on their own.

Before the mid-semester break, staff will brief you on current health and safety concerns as well as necessary precautions for traveling in the host country and/or surrounding countries. You are advised to travel in groups of two or more and will be given emergency contact numbers to carry with you during the break. You should also plan to submit a rough itinerary, with phone numbers where possible, prior to the break.

Please contact your SFS Admissions Counselor with any concerns regarding the mid-semester break.

COMMUNICATIONS

MAIL

Make sure your friends and family all know the Center address, and make sure that they mark all their letters "airmail." Postage from Mexico to the U.S. costs about 40 cents per letter and usually takes anywhere from five days to one month. Mail from the U.S. usually takes two to three weeks to arrive in Mexico.

The Center's address is:

Center for Coastal Studies/AP 15
Puerto San Carlos, BCS
CP 23740
MEXICO

If you have friends and family send you packages, expect a decent delay and you will have to pay a customs fee to pick it up. Please also keep in mind that mail in Mexico is fairly unreliable and packages often disappear. You should instruct friends and family members to avoid sending anything valuable through the mail. Packages that are sent may be legally opened and examined by customs officers. This frequently happens. If this occurs, it will be necessary to trace the package, find out the duty that will be charged, pay the fee and wait for the package to be released. This whole process can take several weeks and potentially be very expensive. Consequently, SFS staff will take no responsibility for packages that are held up by the

Department of Customs. In order to avoid this problem, you should instruct your family not to send any items that may be subject to import duties. In general, the rule of thumb is that all items that could be bought in Mexico will be taxed by customs up to 40%. This includes any food, clothes, computer or electronic equipment, etc. Advise senders to claim very low value on packages if they do send them. The drug laws in Mexico are extremely severe. Please be aware that if someone sends you drugs through the mail and you are caught (which is likely), you could serve a long prison sentence. Note that while the Mexican Postal Service can be erratic at times, it does tend to be more efficient for receiving / sending packages than the various courier services (eg. DHL) which have tended to get stuck in customs more frequently than those sent via the U.S. Postal Service.

TELEPHONE

The Center has telephone access and students may receive or make calls from the student lounge. The number for family and friends to call students on is 011-52-613-13-60451. Students can also make calls to the U.S. using one of many public phones in town, including the one directly in front of the Center. These phones can be used two ways; with local phone cards that can be purchased in town (with these, calls to the States are approximately one dollar per minute) or by using a major U.S. calling card. Calling cards are usable from Mexico only if they come with an international access code. In addition, 800 numbers from the U.S. don't work from the center, so be sure to look up the local access number for Mexico on your provider's website. Be aware that phone calls from Mexico to the U.S. are extremely expensive. You should confirm the price per minute from Mexico to the U.S. before you depart. You may wish to purchase a card with a large number of minutes from a place like BJ's or Sam's Club. If you need to make regular phone calls home, you should bring an ample amount of money to buy phone cards or bring a calling card with an access number for Mexico. Your family may also wish to inquire of your preferred long distance carrier about possible calling plans as the rates may be better on calls placed from the States.

INTERNET

Internet access and e-mail are available for students at the Center to support research and educational work. In order to maintain the stability of the network, the following actions are prohibited:

- Downloading any non-research related files
- Downloading large files, especially audio/video files
- Downloading or running any software applications, including plug-ins and scripts.
- Using any Internet application other than Internet Explorer. (We need to revise this with Gustavo- this policy has not really been enforced)
- Gaining unauthorized access to remote Internet systems or abusing Internet systems or Internet users.
- Taking actions that compromise the security of the Center network.
- Representing The School for Field Studies in any manner.

- Distributing SFS-owned knowledge or propagating falsified information about SFS.
- Spamming, hacking, virus distribution, etc.
- Illegally copying or redistributing copyrighted material.
- Viewing pornographic or illegal content.

In the event of any violation of this policy, SFS reserves the right to suspend or terminate any or all Internet access.

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

Be sure to let your friends and family know that SFS publishes News from the Field every two weeks on our web site (www.fieldstudies.org). This includes photos, updates from the Center Director and Student Affairs Manager on what students have been doing most recently, and quotes from students with their thoughts about their experience. It's a great way for your loved ones to follow your exciting adventures!

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Emergency contact should be made with The School for Field Studies Headquarters office in Salem, Massachusetts at 978-741-3544. Office hours are 8:30am to 5:00pm (Eastern time) Monday through Friday. At all other times SFS maintains a 24-hour emergency message system while students are in the field. This system is for reporting family emergencies that require immediate contact with a student in the field, or to report a problem with a student in transit to or from one of the SFS field stations. To leave a message, which will page a staff member, call 978-741-3567, once prompted, press "2" for the emergency system. While headquarters' staff know the whereabouts of student groups at all times, it may require 24 hours or more to make contact in some cases.

NOTE: Problems or emergencies that arise in the field will be reported directly to the SFS Safety Director. SFS will then contact appropriate parties as necessary.

SAFETY EDUCATION

In some areas where our programs operate the average local five-year-old has vastly superior knowledge about what is important in order to keep safe than our students do upon arrival. Learning to observe and interpret what is going on around you is a desirable skill that may enable you to effectively minimize risks, make better-informed decisions and mitigate the consequences of undesirable events. Like most skills, it takes some time to develop. The following section will help guide your behavior while you are learning and help facilitate the process.

This section (Traveling and Living Abroad) presents traveler best practices and lists a number of information resources. This will serve you during your SFS program time, as well as during travels before or after the program, and during break and free time. In addition, during your on-site orientation you will learn about potential local hazards, safety systems, Center specific rules

and the local Operational Objectives. In addition, you may have discussions based on case studies and on your experiences and those of your group members.

TRAVELING AND LIVING ABROAD

COUNTRY INFORMATION

US State Dept. Country by Country Background Notes: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

US Embassies and Consulates: <http://usembassy.state.gov/>

CIA Country profiles including geography; people; government; economics; transportation; communications: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>

For Government Worldwide Travel Advisories

The following sites contain information on road/travel safety, the political situation, laws, medical facilities, crime, political strife, terrorism, etc:

US State Dept., Bureau of Consular Affairs: <http://travel.state.gov/>

Australian Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade: www.smarttraveller.gov.au

United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office: www.fco.gov.uk

Canadian Dept of Foreign Affairs and International Trade: www.voyage.gc.ca/dest/index.asp

Personal Safety

Adapted from the USC Center for Global Education Study Abroad Safety Handbook

According to travel and study abroad experts, most of the incidents resulting in injury or death of students while participating in study abroad involve:

- Travel/traffic accidents
- Use and abuse of drugs or alcohol
- Sexual harassment and assault
- Crime/petty theft
- Mental health issues/stress
- Diseases and illnesses that exist in the host country

Some Best Practices for Mitigating Personal Safety Risks

Precautions When Accepting Food and Drink: Be cautious about accepting drinks from a stranger, alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Be cautious about accepting food from a stranger.

Risk upon Arrival: Travelers, especially those having just arrived abroad, are often targets of crime and at higher risk of harm, because they:

- Are unfamiliar with their surroundings
- Might not speak the local language well
- Are clearly recognizable as foreigners
- Have not yet learned the social norms or unwritten rules of conduct
- Are eager to get to know new people and the local culture
- Are naive to the intentions of people around them
- Are carrying all their valuables with them when they first step off the plane, train, or boat

Keeping in Control: In addition to the circumstances involved with being new in a foreign country, which are often beyond one's immediate control, there are many situations that you can control. Some controllable factors that place you at greatest risk include:

- Being out after midnight
- Being alone at night in an isolated area
- Being in a known high-crime area
- Sleeping in an unlocked place
- Being out after a local curfew
- Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Non-verbal Communication: Non-verbal communication (such as body language and hand gestures) considered harmless in the U.S. may be offensive to people in other countries. The list of gestures considered rude in other countries can grow beyond the obvious.

Sexually-Transmitted Diseases: Keep yourself free from sexually-transmitted diseases by using protection (like condoms or abstinence). Also, remember that "no" may not always be interpreted as "no" in other countries. Inform yourself about the types of diseases prevalent in the area in which you are traveling. Unprotected sex puts one at risk for acquiring a sexually-transmitted disease, including HIV. Traveling abroad can be romantic - beautiful scenery, a new culture, none of the constraints of home. Do not however, let the romance overwhelm your common sense. If you do decide to have sex, you should make sure that it is protected sex.

International Sources of Information: Inform yourself about your new environment, making use of as many different sources as possible – the Internet, the library, television and radio news programs, and the newspaper. Don't limit yourself to U.S. sources. Instead, contrast the U.S. information with that provided by other countries.

Understanding Locals: Beyond tuning into yourself, make it a point to try to understand what locals are communicating to you, how they feel about you and about U.S. citizens in general, how you are fitting with their values, and how well you understand them. Obviously a stronger grasp of the local language will help you with these things, but even knowing a few essential phrases can be immensely beneficial.

How to Dress: It is often best to dress conservatively – by local standards, so you can't be identified on sight as a tourist or a U.S. citizen.

Jewelry and Other Valuables: Any time or place you travel, be careful with your valuables. Leave your good jewelry at home, and keep money in a safe place like a money belt or hidden pouch

under your clothes. Keep a low profile with regard to your camera and electronic equipment, and keep your bags with you at all times.

Becoming Aware of Your Surroundings: You should be aware of your surroundings, remembering to:

- Pay attention to what people around you are saying
- Find out which areas of the city are less safe than others
- Know which hours of night are considered more dangerous
- Stay and walk only in well-lit areas
- Avoid being alone in unfamiliar neighborhoods
- Know where to get help (police station, fire station, phones, stores, etc.)
- Do not touch suspicious items like letters or packages mailed to you from someone you don't know
- Know what is "normal" and "not normal" to see on a daily basis in the areas you frequent
- Do not respond to explosions or gunfire by going to a window; seek cover away from windows and exterior walls

Effects of U.S. Foreign Policy: The foreign policy of the U.S. does not always sit well with citizens of foreign countries. In some cases, Americans living abroad can be targets of the frustrations of these individuals. Consider the nature of the political climate and relations between the U.S. and the countries you plan to visit.

Crimes against U.S. Citizens: There are some steps you can take to avoid being targeted for politically-motivated crime or anti-U.S. crime in general. Try to assimilate your style of dress and mannerisms as much as possible into the local norms. "Dressing like a U.S. citizen" (or any way conspicuously different from local people) can make you a target.

Political Rallies: Avoid political rallies, which can increase tensions and emotions or breed angry mobs for which a U.S. citizen may serve as a scapegoat.

Health: Every region has its own unique health challenges. We strongly recommended that you consult with a travel medicine clinic or physician who can look at your travel itinerary and your personal health profile and work with you to devise a health strategy for your travel, including all appropriate vaccinations, medications and treatment options.

To locate a travel medicine clinic as well as for information on destinations, outbreaks, diseases, vaccinations, insect protection, safe food and water, and medical emergency preparation: The Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/travel/>

Disease maps; health risks and precautions; travel by air; environmental health risks; accidents, injuries and violence; infectious diseases; vaccine-preventable diseases; malaria; blood transfusions, etc.: <http://www.who.int/en/>

SOME HEALTH CONSIDERATIONS

MEDICATIONS

You should bring enough over-the-counter and/or prescription medication to last throughout the program and your travel before or afterwards, if applicable. Keep it in its original container (this will be helpful when passing through customs). Please make sure that all medication is noted on the SFS Medical Form. Program staff will check in with you on your medication requirements (storage, schedule, etc.) during the orientation at the Center. Per local laws, staff may be limited in their ability to dispense over-the-counter and prescription medications.

SPECIAL MEDICAL CONDITIONS/NEEDS

If you have any allergies or special conditions which might lead to sudden illness (such as asthma, diabetes, bee sting or penicillin allergies, etc.), you must inform the staff of possible reactions. You should also consider discussing these with the rest of the student group during the orientation at the Center so that other people will know how to react in case you suddenly need assistance or medication. If you have any critical medications, you must carry them with you at all times and should report these medications on their SFS Medical Form. SFS also recommends that students consider wearing a medical alert bracelet describing any special medical conditions.

If you have asthma, even if you have not had any problems for years, you should bring an inhaler and all the necessary medications because past students have found that asthma acts up in some of the environments where our Centers are located.

FOOD (FROM THE CDC)

To avoid illness, travelers should be advised to select food with care. All raw food is subject to contamination. Particularly in areas where hygiene and sanitation are inadequate, the traveler should be advised to avoid salads, uncooked vegetables, and unpasteurized milk and milk products such as cheese, and to eat only food that has been cooked and is still hot or fruit that has been peeled by the traveler personally.

Undercooked and raw meat, fish, and shellfish can carry various intestinal pathogens. Cooked food that has been allowed to stand for several hours at ambient temperature can provide a fertile medium for bacterial growth and should be thoroughly reheated before serving. Consumption of food and beverages obtained from street food vendors has been associated with an increased risk of illness.

PROTECTION FROM INSECTS

Travelers should be advised that exposure to spider and insect bites can be minimized by modifying patterns of activity or behavior. Some vector mosquitoes are most active in twilight periods at dawn and dusk or in the evening. Avoidance of outdoor activity during these periods can reduce risk of exposure. Wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats minimizes areas of exposed skin. Shirts should be tucked in. Repellents applied to clothing, shoes, tents, mosquito nets, and other gear will enhance protection.

When exposure to ticks or biting insects is a possibility, travelers should be advised to tuck their pants into their socks and to wear boots, not sandals. Permethrin-based repellents applied to clothing as directed will enhance protection. Travelers should be advised to inspect themselves and their clothing for ticks, both during outdoor activity and at the end of the day. Ticks are detected more easily on light-colored or white clothing. Ticks should be promptly removed from skin by using tweezers to firmly grasp the head and then slowly pull back. Bite should be cleaned well with an antimicrobial soap or alcohol etc.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN MEXICO

In this section, we present some of the health and safety issues for Baja California Sur. Statistically, the most common injuries sustained by students on SFS programs are recreational in nature. The most common medical problem is traveler's diarrhea. However, international traveling and living presents potentially significant health and safety challenges.

DISEASE

Baja California Sur has its own unique health challenges. It is strongly recommended that you consult with a travel medicine clinic or physician who can match up your health profile with this region and any additional areas where you may plan to travel, and work with you to create a health strategy that includes vaccinations, etc.

Please see <http://www.cdc.gov> for a list of immunizations recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), including routine immunizations (vaccines that are given to all children in the United States and that are usually required for matriculation into elementary school and into college) and immunizations especially for the country where you will be traveling.

IMMUNIZATIONS RECOMMENDED BY THE CDC FOR TRAVELERS TO MEXICO

Hepatitis A: Hepatitis A is a viral infection of the liver that results in jaundice and severe malaise. Unlike hepatitis B it is rarely fatal, but disease can be protracted, and infected persons can be ill for six weeks or more. Infection is transmitted by fecal-contaminated food or water. Symptoms

occur 2 to 6 weeks after first exposure to the virus. There are now two vaccines licensed in the United States that are extremely effective in preventing hepatitis A infection, and that are quite safe to administer. Both vaccines require two doses (the booster dose is given 6-9 months after the initial dose). The initial dose, however, is effective in providing protection, and the CDC recommends that all travelers to Mexico receive this vaccine.

Rabies: Rabies is a viral infection that is transmitted from animals to humans by bites or scratches. Rabies is present in bats, the dog population and among other domestic and wild animals. It is possible to take rabies prophylaxis before departing for Mexico. The prophylactic administration of rabies vaccine (which consists of 3 doses) does not eliminate the need for taking vaccine if you are bitten by a potentially rabid animal. It does, however, reduce the number of injections that are required from 5 to 2, and eliminates the need to administer rabies immune globulin. The CDC recommends that rabies pre-exposure prophylaxis be given to all persons visiting for more than 30 days areas of the world where rabies is a constant threat. You should discuss with your doctor the advisability of receiving the rabies vaccine.

The most effective way to avoid rabies is to avoid animals. You should not pet or approach animals, including dogs. If you are bitten or scratched by a dog or other animal while in Mexico, the same precautions apply as if you were bitten in the United States. The bite should be thoroughly washed with soap and water, and the animal watched for signs of illness. If the dog or other animal cannot be identified, then immunization with rabies vaccine (a series of 5 shots) and administration of rabies immune globulin should be given. For bites from other animals the need for rabies vaccine will need to be discussed with medical personnel.

Typhoid Fever Vaccine: Typhoid fever is a bacterial infection that is spread by fecal contaminated food or water. The best protection is offered by exercising caution in what you eat or drink (see below). Two vaccines are available in the United States that provide about 50% protection against infection with typhoid. One vaccine is injectable, and requires a single dose, and the other is taken orally, with four doses taken over 1 week. The CDC recommends taking one of these two vaccines. Taking the vaccine does not preclude the continued need for vigilance in what you eat and drink – you can still acquire typhoid despite taking the vaccine, and you can obviously put yourself at risk of acquiring other infections that cause diarrhea if you are not judicious in what you consume.

DISEASE (NOT VACCINE PREVENTABLE)

FOOD ISSUES: Undercooked food can also cause diseases other than diarrhea. In Mexico, undercooked beef or pork can cause tapeworm or trichinosis (a parasitic infection of muscle). Fecal contaminated food can result in cystercercosis, which is also a parasitic infection of muscle or brain. Thus it is important to insure that all food, including meat, is thoroughly cooked before ingestion. Unpasteurized milk products should also be avoided, as they can result in a number of infections, including tuberculosis and brucellosis (a bloodstream infection that causes fever and malaise).

MALARIA: Malaria is not present in the area of Mexico where the program takes place, and thus there is no need to take malaria prophylaxis for this region. If you plan to visit areas of Mexico where malaria is present (usually southern Mexico outside the typical tourist destinations), you should check with your doctor about the need to take prophylaxis.

DENGUE: Dengue is a viral infection that can cause a very severe flu-like illness. It is transmitted by mosquitoes, and is becoming increasingly common in many tropical countries. There is no vaccine against dengue available in the United States. Prevention is achieved by preventing, or reducing, mosquito bites.

CHOLERA: Cholera is a very severe form of watery diarrhea, and is caused by infection with a bacterium, *Vibrio cholerae*, spread by drinking contaminated water or food in which the organism is present. Epidemic cholera has occurred in Central and South America in the last five years. Mexico, because of its relatively high standard of living and hygiene (for the region) has not been severely affected by this epidemic. The risk of acquiring cholera while in Mexico is exceedingly low if you follow routine precautions for food and water ingestion. Although there is a cholera vaccine licensed for use in the United States, it is not particularly effective, and the CDC does not recommend it.

DIARRHEA: Diarrhea is the most common infectious ailment that you are likely to encounter. Contrary to some popular notions, it is not a change in diet that causes diarrhea, but rather infection with micro-organisms - either bacteria or viruses. These bacteria and viruses are transmitted by food or water that has been fecal-contaminated, usually with human feces, but occasionally with the feces of animals that may shed micro-organisms that can cause diarrhea in humans. Preventing diarrhea means not ingesting food that is fecal-contaminated, or by killing the microorganisms before ingesting the food. The most popular admonition in regards to food is "cook it, boil it, peel it, or forget it." Eating food that has been heated but has become cold, or that has not been thoroughly cooked, presents a risk. This is especially true for food that is prepared outside the Center. Drinking untreated water also presents a risk, and should be avoided. At the Center, and in most places in the country, running tap water is safe but when in doubt, exercise caution. Beverages that are safe to drink are tea or coffee (as the water has been boiled), and carbonated beverages, as the carbonation kills any microorganisms. Still water should be ingested only if you are sure that it has been boiled or treated. Bottled water that is carbonated is usually, but not always, safe.

OTHER HAZARDS

Some of the hazards associated with this SFS program and doing field work and living in Mexico are described below. While SFS has tried to anticipate as many risks as possible, you may nonetheless encounter risks that are not described here.

BOATS/SWIMMING: The most immediate risks are presented by the Center's proximity to the ocean and the time the program spends traveling in small boats and kayaks. Although SFS boats are equipped with safety equipment required by the US Coast Guard and everyone is required to wear life jackets at all times while in the boats, there is potential for a water-related accident. Bahía Magdalena itself is a protected and fairly calm body of water, with minimal currents.

AUTOMOBILES: Motor vehicle accidents occur frequently in Baja California Sur since the condition of the roads here is well below that of the roads in the United States. Local drivers tend to be less conscientious about speed and rules of the road.

STINGING ANIMALS: Several stinging marine animals are common in the area, including several fish, stingrays, and jellyfish. Encounters with these may cause discomfort, but they are seldom serious, and measures to minimize the risk of encounter will be taken.

RATTLESNAKES AND SCORPIONS: Rattlesnakes are common in Baja California Sur, although they are not aggressive and generally signal their presence during infrequent encounters. Scorpions are common, though not lethal. A scorpion sting is comparable to a bad bee sting. Upon arrival, you will be taught techniques in order to avoid scorpions.

SUN EXPOSURE: The possibility of sunburn is very real. You should bring one bottle of waterproof sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 for each month of the program (sunscreen will not be readily available to students at the Center). Not only for short-term comfort but also for long-term health, you need to wear sunscreen at all times while outdoors. Also, bring a hat with a brim, sunglasses, and lightweight, long-sleeved, light colored clothing to wear in the sun. It will be sunny most of the time, and during the program we will spend as much time on the water as possible. The weather conditions in Bahía Magdalena are almost tropical, and the sun there is stronger than the sun farther north. SFS will issue frequent reminders to cover up or put on sunscreen.

HURRICANES: The hurricane season typically runs from June to November. As Bahía Magdalena is relatively protected, we do not usually experience significant surge. However, we do get high winds and rain and it is not unusual for roads to be impassable for several days following a tropical cyclone. We have a hurricane contingency plan that includes moving all staff and students to a hotel in Puerto San Carlos.

Other problems related to exposure to the sun are dehydration and the danger of heat exhaustion and heat stroke. You should bring two one-quart water bottles for use in boats and on hikes.

If you plan to travel to other areas, either inside or outside of Baja California Sur, Mexico, the health and safety risks may be different, and you should educate yourself and consult with your travel medicine specialist as to what additional measures may be required.

MEDICAL CARE

Staff provide initial first aid in the event of an accident or illness. Student Affairs Managers have Wilderness First Responder certification (72-hour emergency medical training).

Community health care in Puerto San Carlos is provided by one of two clinics located less than a mile from the Center. Any serious medical accident will require transportation to the hospital (45 minutes away) in Ciudad Constitución. You will be responsible for bearing the costs of medications and visits to the clinic and hospital, including the costs of an SFS staff member to accompany you.

WHAT'S UP WITH CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT?

DEFINING CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

Think about how you are feeling now as you prepare to go abroad with an SFS program. Are you feeling excited? Anxious? Overwhelmed? Content? Afraid?

Now, think about how you might feel when you first arrive at your host country. Will you feel high on life? Bombarded by the newness of it all? Jet-lagged? Irritated or humbled by the reality that you are unable to communicate as well as you are used to being able to?

How will your emotions and thoughts change with time after the initial high of arrival? Will you be amazed and/or frustrated by the differences between how things are done at home and how things are done at your temporary home abroad? Confronted with these differences, will you question values you held and always thought were in the “right”? Will you grow in depth of thought and sense of self? Will you be unbearably homesick and seek out a friend to talk with?

It may seem like a very long time from now, but imagine returning home after study abroad. How do you hope you have changed as a result of your time abroad? How will others see your new personal, cultural, social, and academic developments? Will it be easy to reconnect with family, friends, and your community? Will it take effort? How will you communicate your experiences and developments and help loved ones take part in an important period of your life?

The flow of emotions and experiences above describes the cultural adjustment process that many students move through before, during, and after their study abroad terms.

So, what is cultural adjustment? Most simply put, cultural adjustment is the process of adjusting to a different cultural context. It is the process of filtering through initially identifiable differences in eating style, language, customs, and more to discover the underlying values and assumptions that are the foundation of a certain way of life. Whether you are from the United States or from another country, confronting another way of life may entail questioning your own basic values and beliefs. Cultural adjustment may beg of you to ask the question, “Who am I?” By asking such a fundamental question and working through the answers, you can build a strong sense of self, gain more confidence in who you are, learn to identify at a basic level with people from any background, and become more accepting of others. At this point, you will have begun to develop a sense of global citizenship, a crucial key to developing a peaceful global society.

SIGNS OF CULTURE SHOCK

Experiencing some difficulty adjusting to your new environment is normal and even important for personal development. Some students experience:

Homesickness

Physical symptoms such as mild colds and headaches

Anxiety, depression, disappointment, and/or frustration

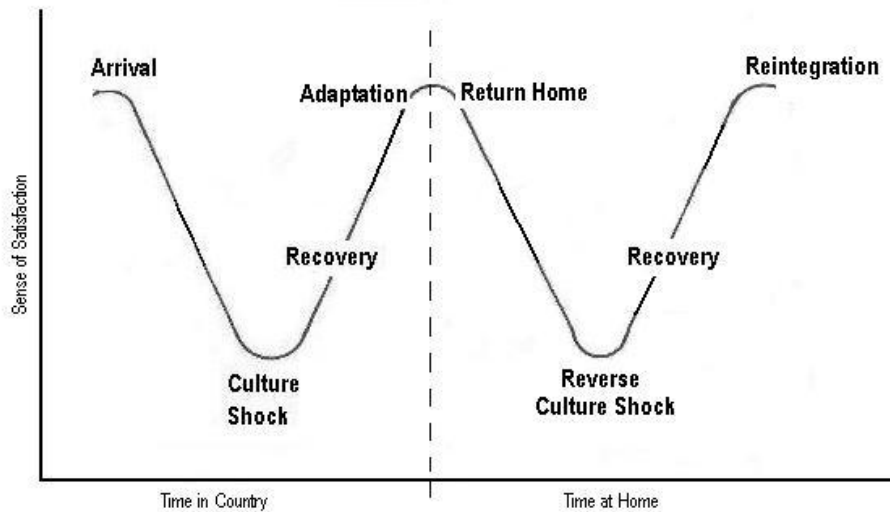
Defensiveness toward home culture(s)

Tendency to put the host or home culture(s) and way(s) of life on a pedestal

Criticism toward home or host countries

Gratitude for the chance to rethink world views and customs

Cycling through Cultural Adjustment: The “W” Curve



The model above puts into visual format the process of cultural adjustment previously described.

Arrival: Upon arrival, many students are exhilarated by the hundreds of new sights, sounds, and smells of their host country. You may feel physically exhausted from the travel, and you may need to give your body time and care to help it adjust to the different weather, geographic conditions, food, and time schedule. During this initial period, you may experience a variety of heightened emotions.

Culture Shock: After the initial high period, you may begin to notice the many differences between your home and your temporary home abroad. Processing these differences may be difficult, and many students report emotions of anxiety, stress, confusion, homesickness, discouragement, hostility toward the local culture and customs, and even depression. You may experience physical symptoms such as colds, headaches, or stomach upsets. On the other hand, some students experience very little culture shock.

Recovery: Fear not! With effort and time, you will get your legs back under you again. You may wish to employ some of the coping strategies listed in the next section, or find your own way to regain and rethink equilibrium.

Adaptation: At this stage, students have renegotiated belief systems and “the way things are done”. You may feel at home in your residence abroad.

Returning Home: Some students find that just when they have become comfortable with their surroundings abroad, it is time to return home! Because you are traveling back to a familiar place, you may not expect to experience reverse culture shock, which mirrors the culture shock process. Many students experience re-entry culture shock more severely than they do culture shock. The best way to smooth the reverse culture shock process is to prepare for it before, during, and after your time abroad. Make sure to share your experiences and personal development with important family and friends so that they can take part in your growth! Continuous communication in a spirit of sharing (rather than expecting or needing others to understand) will greatly smooth the reentry process.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE AN AMERICAN?

Perhaps this is your first time visiting a foreign country for an extended period. By removing yourself from the USA or other country of origin and being confronted with difference, you may gain a greater awareness of what it means to be American, Chinese, Mexican, or whatever you identify as.

In part because of the USA’s prominent media and political and economic presence, you may find that people around the world have formed viewpoints, even stereotypes about Americans.

Below are some examples of stereotypes of Americans that you might encounter in-country. Keep in mind that there are many different points of view on Americans.

Wealthy and wasteful
Caring about the environment
Heavy drinkers
Careless
Want to help others
Loud and dumb
Openly friendly and kind
The youth like to party
Academically-oriented

As you can see, stereotypes are not always accurate, and they do not apply to every person within a culture. Making generalizations about a culture or people is normal and even useful in learning about them. However, be aware of the possible negative impact of stereotyping. Be open to and appreciative of the great differences between individuals within a population.

A NOTE TO WOMEN AND DIVERSE STUDENTS

What it means to identify as IGLBTA, a woman, a person of color, a member of a certain religious group, a participant with a disability, etc. may be very different in your host country than at home. For example, a gay student may find that the host community is much less accepting of homosexuality than his university community. Asian or Asian-American students may find that host nationals, who perhaps have had little or no contact with Asians, view them as exotic. Students who are accustomed to being part of the majority group at home (e.g. Caucasian students) may need to readjust to living as a minority abroad. The change may be for better or for worse, but you might not be treated or viewed in the way that you are accustomed to at home.

There is more information about women and underrepresented students traveling abroad than it is possible to cover in this section. Please use the resources below to better inform yourself as you prepare for your abroad experience.

Women Travel Tips - Women

<http://www.womentraveltips.com/index.shtml>

University of Minnesota's Learning Abroad Center – GLBT Students, Students with Disabilities, Multicultural Students (Scroll down page for links)

<http://www.umabroad.umn.edu/students/index.html>

All Abroad – Ethnic Minorities

<http://allabroad.us/>

Mobility International USA – Students with Disabilities

<http://www.miusa.org/>

COPING WITH CULTURAL ADJUSTMENT

What are some tricks for coping with and growing through the cultural adjustment process?

Keep a journal. Be your own best counselor and write about the experiences, emotions, and thoughts that you have.

Take care of your physical body. Be sure to get sufficient exercise, and take care of your body's nutritional needs. Get enough rest and sleep.

Communicate. If you are feeling particularly down, approach a friend, staff member, or mentor. Sometimes just talking about difficulties you are facing makes the burden seem lighter. Many of the people surrounding you at the Center have experienced or are

experiencing the same cultural adjustment process as you. There is strength and comfort in sharing!

Step out of your comfort zone. When everything around us is new, we sometimes just want to withdraw. Although some level of withdrawal can be helpful, in the end, there is more joy in living fully than hiding from fear. Do not do anything unreasonably risky or foolish, but practice your Spanish skills with community members. Try delicious foods you had never heard of before. Travel with friends during the mid-semester break. Take advantage of your abroad experience, because you will not have the same exact opportunity again!

Breathe! The simple act of inhaling and exhaling a few times will help clear your mind.

Keep in touch with family and friends at home. Regularly sharing your experiences will help ease the reentry process. However, be aware of spending too much time on the phone or internet to the detriment of your abroad experience.

Remember to be grateful for what you have. A sense of gratitude makes cultural adjustment easier because of a positive outlook. You will see things in a more positive light, and those you meet will respond to you more positively because they can sense your humility and good feelings.

The above are just examples of strategies for facing cultural adjustment. There are a multitude of ways that people cope, and you may discover other strategies that work particularly well for you.

Everyone at The School for Field Studies extends a warm welcome to you and looks forward to seeing you in the field!